

Pettitt's SHC - August 31, 2014

Ferns St Aidans 1-15, Rapparees 0-9

Ferns St Aidans secured top spot in Group B of the Pettitt's Senior hurling championship in Farmleigh on Sunday last and in doing so inflicted Rapparees' first defeat of the season on the Bellefield boys.

The win was only secured with a final quarter burst from last year's beaten finalists, but in truth the pressure was building on their overly-cautious opponents as the second-half progressed. Rathnure will now be their last eight opponents, a re-match of last year's quarter-final which Ferns won going away.

Rapparees shot themselves in the foot here. Leading by 0-9 to 0-7 at the break, the Enniscorthy town side failed to score in the second-half and rarely threatened to do so. Their defence actually played well but they were aided by Ricky Fox sitting in and allowing Declan Ruth to sweep.

However, there was no out ball for Rapparees, and no inspiration, and they let their understrength opposition dominate the middle third. Only Ferns' profligacy stopped the victors getting in front earlier but once they got ahead there was only one winner.

Playing with the breeze, Rapparees did enough to earn the interval lead. The game wasn't good though, as too many lazy fouls, perpetrated by both sides, led to lots of stopping and starting. Tommy Dwyer got four points in the half, Christopher O'Connor scored a brace and Pádraig Bolger also registered but they were still behind.

Rapparees led through Ruth in the opening minute and never trailed in the period. Kevin Foley scored a double, Tomás Mahon got a treble, Jack Kelly notched the point of the half while both corner-forwards also registered for their side's two-point interval lead.

Only a superb Brendan Jordan point troubled the flagmen in the first 17 minutes of the second-half. However, when John Breen's flipped ball over the top was batted to the net by 'Bitsy' O'Connor, the writing was on the wall for Rapparees.

Ferns' defence continued to dominate; Pádraig Ryan was probably the best 'Ryan' on the field on the day and that was saying something. Points started to flow, undoubtedly helped by the introduction of the half-injured Paul Morris.

Morris got two points of the seven his side scored in the last eleven minutes, as did Tommy Dwyer and O'Connor, while Ian Byrne also hit the target to send Ferns clear and condemn Rapparees to defeat and a quarter-final clash with Shelmaliers.

Ferns St Aidans: Michael Walsh; Niall Maguire, Pádraig Ryan, Colm Whelan; Gavin Bailey, James Tonks, Declan Byrne; Brendan Jordan (0-1), Tommy Dwyer (0-6, 5 frees); Pádraig Bolger (0-1), John Breen, Ian Byrne (0-1); Derek Thorpe, Jamie Whelan, Christopher O'Connor (1-4).

Subs: Paul Morris (0-2) for Whelan (43), Ben Cowman for Thorpe (50).

Rapparees: Eamonn Furlong; Ben Edwards, Liam Ryan, John Ryan; Jack Kelly (0-1), Declan Ruth (0-1 free), Peter O'Sullivan; Kevin Courtney, Ricky Fox; Tomás Mahon (0-3, 2 frees), Tom Wall, Eoin Quigley; James Peare (0-1), Kevin Foley (0-2), Tommy Foley (0-1). **Subs:** Kevin Ryan for Quigley (43), Anthony Russell for Courtney (54), Darragh Pepper for Peare (56).

Referee: Barry Redmond (Clonard)